

# Sports as Medium for Counselling Guidance for Student Mental Health: Case Study in Higer Education 4 Takengon

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## Abstrak

**Tujuan**-Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran kegiatan olahraga dalam meningkatkan kesehatan mental siswa melalui layanan Bimbingan dan Konseling di SMA Negeri 4 Takengon. **Research Metodologi/Desain/Pendekatan**- Pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif digunakan. Subjek penelitian meliputi konselor bimbingan, guru pendidikan jasmani, kepala sekolah, dan siswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang mencakup pengurangan data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Validitas data dipertahankan melalui triangulasi sumber, teknik, dan pemeriksaan anggota. **Temuan**-Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan olahraga memiliki dampak positif yang signifikan terhadap kesehatan mental siswa, terutama dalam mengurangi stres dan kecemasan serta meningkatkan kepercayaan diri. Layanan bimbingan dan konseling bertindak sebagai fasilitator dengan mengintegrasikan kegiatan olahraga ke dalam program pengembangan siswa untuk mendukung kesejahteraan psikologis. **Orisinalitas/Nilai**- Sinergi antara olahraga dan layanan bimbingan dan konseling menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih kondusif, membangun keterampilan sosial, dan memperkuat nilai-nilai positif seperti disiplin dan kerja sama. Dengan demikian, kegiatan olahraga yang terintegrasi dengan layanan bimbingan dan konseling merupakan strategi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kesehatan mental siswa.

**Keywords:** *Kegiatan Olahraga, Kesehatan Mental, Bimbingan dan Konseling*

## Abstract

**Purpose**-This study aims to describe the role of sports activities in improving students' mental health through Guidance and Counselling services at Takengon 4th State Senior High School. **Research Methodology / Design / Approach**-A qualitative approach with descriptive methods was used. The research subjects included guidance counsellors, physical education teachers, the principal, and students selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and member checks. **Finding**-The results showed that sports activities had a significant positive impact on students' mental health, particularly in reducing stress and anxiety and increasing self-confidence. Guidance and counselling services act as facilitators by integrating sports activities into student development programmes to support psychological well-being. **Originality/Value**-The synergy between sports and guidance and counselling services creates a more conducive learning environment, builds social skills, and reinforces positive values such as discipline and cooperation. Thus, sports activities integrated with guidance and counselling services are an effective strategy for improving students' mental health.

**Keywords:** Sports Activities, Mental Health, Guidance and Counselling

## Introduction

Mental health is one of the fundamental aspects that cannot be separated from human life, especially among adolescents. Adolescence is a phase of development characterised by significant physical, emotional, and social changes (Helamliah et al., 2024). During this period, adolescents are in the process of self-discovery, often accompanied by various pressures from both within themselves and their surroundings. The demands to achieve, be accepted in social circles, and adapt to various changes often create a considerable mental burden. If not managed properly, this burden can affect adolescents' mental health and have an impact on their academic performance, behaviour, and social interactions. Mental health issues among adolescents are currently a serious concern in the world of education. Many high school students experience symptoms of stress, anxiety, and even depression due to academic and non-academic pressures. For example, high grade expectations, competition with peers, family conflicts, and the influence of social media can cause feelings of stress (Syehifi et al., 2024). If left unaddressed, this condition will hinder the optimal development of students' potential. In fact, mental health disorders often lead to deviant behaviour, decreased motivation to learn, and difficulties in establishing social relationships (Sari & Nurdini, 2022). Therefore, maintaining and improving students' mental health must be a top priority in the implementation of education in schools.

Good mental health is very important to support student learning success. Students who are mentally healthy will be able to concentrate, think positively, control their emotions, and establish good social relationships (Mubarak & Helsa, 2025). Conversely, students with mental disorders will find it difficult to achieve optimal academic performance. Therefore, various efforts must be made by schools to help students maintain their mental health. One approach that is considered effective in improving mental health is through physical activity, particularly regular and planned sports activities (Karim & Hambali, 2024). Sport is an activity that is not only beneficial for physical fitness, but also has a positive effect on mental health. When a person engages in physical activity, the body releases endorphins, which serve to improve mood, reduce anxiety, and overcome stress. Thus, sport can be used as a way to manage mental pressure on students. In addition, exercise can also build self-confidence, shape healthy lifestyle patterns, and improve emotional control. This is in line with the results of various studies showing that students who exercise regularly have lower stress levels than those who rarely exercise.

In addition to physiological benefits, exercise also provides significant social benefits. Sports activities, especially those carried out in groups, can improve students' social skills, such as the ability to work together, communicate, and respect one another (Setiawati et al., 2024). The interactions that take place during sports activities can reduce feelings of loneliness and increase a sense of togetherness among students. For students who tend to withdraw from social interactions, sports can be a means of building self-confidence and expanding their network of friends. Thus, sports are not only beneficial for reducing stress, but can also strengthen healthy social relationships in the school environment. In the context of education, guidance and counselling teachers play an important role in supporting students' mental health. Guidance and counselling teachers are tasked with providing services to help students overcome various problems, whether personal, social, academic, or career-related (Anggraini, 2025). BK services in schools are not only oriented towards resolving existing problems, but also serve as a preventive measure to prevent problems from getting worse. Therefore, BK teachers must be able to develop creative and innovative service strategies, one of which is by utilising sports activities as part of the counselling programme.

Integrating sports activities into counselling services can be an effective alternative in helping students cope with mental pressure. Through this approach, students are not only given verbal counselling, but are also encouraged to channel their emotions and stress through physical activity. This service can be packaged in the form of sports-based group counselling, social skills training through sports games, or physical relaxation activities designed to reduce tension (Abidin, 2024). Thus, counselling services will be more engaging, enjoyable, and have a tangible impact on students' mental well-being. Unfortunately, the practice of integrating sports into counselling services in schools is still rare. Most schools only view sports as part of Physical Education or extracurricular activities, without seeing the great potential of sports to support mental health. Common obstacles include a lack of understanding among guidance counsellors about the benefits of sports in counselling, limited facilities, and low student interest in participating in sports activities consistently (Aini et al., 2023). Therefore, research is needed to

provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of sports activities in supporting counselling services to improve students' mental health.

Takengon State Senior High School 4 is one of the senior high schools with a diverse student background. At this school, there are still students who experience mental pressure due to academic demands and social problems. Some students show symptoms such as anxiety about exams, stress due to low grades, and lack of confidence in interacting with peers. This condition requires guidance counsellors to provide more innovative services that are able to meet the needs of students. One effort that can be made is to integrate sports activities into the guidance counselling programme to make it more attractive and have a real impact. In addition, Takengon, as an area with a strong sporting culture, can be an opportunity to develop this programme. The community in this area generally has a habit of playing sports, such as football, volleyball, and gymnastics. By utilising this potential, sports activities can be used as a means that is not only beneficial for physical health, but also for reducing stress levels and improving students' mental health. If this programme is implemented properly, Takengon 4 State Senior High School can become an example for other schools in developing sports-based guidance counselling services.

This approach is also in line with the educational paradigm that emphasises the importance of developing students' potential holistically, covering cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Education does not only focus on mastery of subject matter, but also on character building and the psychological well-being of students. By integrating sports into counselling services, schools have made a real contribution to realising a comprehensive education, namely creating students who are physically and mentally healthy (Rizai & Nakhma'ussolikah, 2022). Sports activities combined with counselling services also support the achievement of the counselling and guidance objectives themselves, namely helping individuals achieve independence and happiness. Through sports, students learn to manage their emotions, improve their mental endurance, and develop social skills that are very important for their future lives. Thus, research on the role of sports in counselling services is not only beneficial for students, but also for teachers, schools, and the world of education in general.

Previous studies have proven that exercise can improve mental health, but there have not been many studies that specifically examine the integration of exercise with counselling services in schools. Therefore, this study is important because it will provide a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of this approach in improving students' mental well-being. In addition to contributing to the development of counselling theory and practice, this study is also expected to serve as a reference for counselling teachers to create more creative services that are tailored to students' needs (Fauziah et al., 2022). With innovations in guidance counselling services, it is hoped that students will be more motivated to participate in programmes that are beneficial to their mental health. Based on the above description, it is clear that sports activities play an important role in improving students' mental health when combined with guidance and counselling services. Therefore, this study will examine in more depth the role of sports activities in improving students' mental health through guidance counselling services at Takengon 4th State Senior High School. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference in developing innovative, effective, and relevant counselling services strategies that align with students' needs, thereby achieving comprehensive educational objective

## Method

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of sports activities in improving students' mental health through Guidance and Counselling services at Takengon 4th State Senior High School. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, including guidance counsellors, sports teachers, students who are active in sports activities, and the school principal. Data collection was conducted through observation of sports activities, in-depth interviews with relevant parties, and documentation in the form of guidance and counselling programme notes, sports schedules, and photos of activities. This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 4 Takengon for three months, from March to May 2025.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The research process included the preparation stage (permitting and instrument development), data collection

(observation, interviews, documentation), data analysis, and reporting of research results. Using this method, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of the role of sports activities in supporting students' mental health through counselling services at school will be obtained.

### **Findings and discussion**

The results of the study indicate that sporting activities have a significant impact on the mental health of students at Takengon 4th State Senior High School. Students who actively participate in sporting activities tend to have lower stress levels, higher motivation to learn, and better social interactions. This is in line with the theory that exercise stimulates endorphins, which have a relaxing effect and improve mood. These findings prove that sports are not only a means of maintaining physical fitness, but also have an important psychological impact. Guidance and counselling teachers at SMA Negeri 4 Takengon utilise sports activities as a medium for providing services to students. Guidance and counselling teachers integrate sports into group counselling services to help students reduce academic pressure and increase self-confidence. This strategy is considered effective because students feel more comfortable expressing their emotions when they are in a pleasant physical activity setting. This reinforces the view that counselling does not have to be conducted formally in the guidance counselling room, but can be done using creative methods that suit the needs of students.

Sports activities carried out at Takengon State Senior High School 4 include regular physical education classes, extracurricular activities such as football, volleyball and badminton, as well as sports activities specially designed by guidance counsellors as part of the counselling programme. Each type of sport provides different benefits for students. For example, team sports such as football and volleyball help improve cooperation, while individual sports such as badminton help train concentration and emotional control. This shows that the selection of the right type of sport can be tailored to the mental development goals of students. The integration of sports activities into guidance counselling services also helps students develop social skills. Based on interviews with students, many of them feel that it is easier to socialise and build friendships through sports activities. Students who were initially quiet become more open, because sports create an informal and enjoyable atmosphere. Thus, sports not only serve as a physical activity, but also as an effective medium for communication and interaction.

From the results of the observation, it can be seen that students who regularly participate in sports activities have more positive behaviour in class. They are more disciplined, actively ask questions, and are able to work together with their peers. Conversely, students who rarely participate in sports activities tend to show higher levels of stress and are less enthusiastic about learning. This supports the theory that physical activity can increase stress resistance and improve mood, so that students can participate in learning activities better. Guidance counsellors state that a sports-based counselling approach is more effective than conventional methods. This is because students do not feel pressured when participating in enjoyable activities. During sports activities, guidance counsellors can provide guidance indirectly, for example by motivating students, teaching them cooperation, and guiding them on how to manage their emotions. In this way, the counselling process is more natural and less rigid.

In addition to providing mental health benefits, sporting activities also help students reduce negative habits. Some students admit that after regularly exercising, they rarely feel bored and are not easily influenced by deviant behaviour. This is because their time is more productive and filled with positive activities. In other words, sport acts as an effective means of diverting attention away from unhealthy behaviour and towards beneficial activities. The results of the study also show the influence of sporting activities on increasing students' self-confidence. Some students revealed that when they successfully demonstrated their abilities in sports, they felt more appreciated and had the confidence to perform in public. This condition has a positive impact on their courage in the learning process, such as daring to ask questions, answering questions, and being active in discussions.

The effect of sport on emotional control is also very apparent. Students who regularly participate in sporting activities are better able to manage their anger, reduce anxiety, and are less likely to become frustrated when faced with learning difficulties. Sports help them channel negative energy through physical activity, so that emotions are not vented in the form of harmful behaviour. Guidance counsellors acknowledge that students who are active in sports are less likely to visit the guidance counselling room to complain about stress or anxiety. However, the integration of sports into guidance counselling services at Takengon 4th State Senior High School is not yet fully optimal. One of the main obstacles is the limited sports facilities and infrastructure. Not all types of sports

can be done due to facility limitations. In addition, the timing of implementation is also a challenge due to the busy academic schedule. Guidance counsellors must find the right time so that these activities do not interfere with core lessons.

Another obstacle is that some students are still not interested in participating in sports. This is due to differences in interests and physical abilities among students. Some students feel insecure about participating because they are afraid of failing or being ridiculed. To overcome this, guidance counsellors try to create an inclusive sports environment, where every student is valued based on their efforts, not just their results. The support of the school greatly influences the success of this programme. Based on interviews with the headmaster, the school has given its permission and support to the sports-based counselling programme because it is considered effective in improving students' mental health. In fact, the headmaster plans to include this programme in the annual work plan so that it becomes a sustainable activity.

The role of physical education teachers is also very important in supporting this programme. Physical education teachers and guidance counsellors work together to determine the appropriate types of activities and actively involve students. This collaboration shows that improving students' mental health requires synergy between parties, not just the responsibility of guidance counsellors alone. Sports activities in counselling services are also in line with the concept of holistic education, which emphasises a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Education aims not only to educate students academically, but also to shape individuals who are physically and spiritually healthy. With this programme, Takengon 4th State Senior High School has strived to provide comprehensive education in accordance with the mandate of the National Education System Law.

Based on these findings, it can be said that sport is an effective counselling medium for addressing mental health issues in students. Sports-based counselling programmes have been proven to reduce stress levels, increase self-confidence, improve social interaction, and form healthy lifestyle habits. This illustrates that counselling services must continue to innovate in order to be more attractive and beneficial to students. Students' experiences in participating in sports activities also have a positive psychological impact. Some students stated that they felt happier, more enthusiastic, and more able to control negative thoughts after exercising. This indicates that sports can be an important strategy in maintaining students' mental health amid increasing academic pressure.

In the long term, sports activities integrated with counselling services can shape healthy lifestyles among students. Students will become accustomed to filling their free time with beneficial activities and avoiding harmful behaviours. Thus, the positive impact of this programme is not only felt in the present, but also equips students to face the challenges of life in the future. Guidance counsellors also believe that the success of this programme is greatly influenced by its consistency. If sports activities are only carried out occasionally, their impact on mental health will not be maximised. Therefore, guidance counsellors strive to develop a regular schedule and integrate these activities with counselling programmes to ensure their continuity.

The findings of this study support previous theories stating that exercise has a close relationship with mental health. However, this study makes a new contribution by showing that exercise can be systematically combined with counselling services in schools. Thus, this approach can be used as an innovative model for other schools in improving students' mental well-being. Based on the above description, it is clear that the role of sports activities in improving students' mental health through counselling services is very important and effective. This programme not only provides direct benefits in the form of stress reduction, but also has a positive impact on academic achievement, social relationships, and character building. Therefore, it is recommended that schools continue to develop sports-based counselling services as a preventive and curative strategy to maintain students' mental health in a sustainable manner.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that sports activities play a significant role in improving students' mental health through collaboration with the Guidance and Counselling services at Takengon 4th State Senior High School. Sports have been proven to reduce the levels of stress, anxiety, and academic pressure experienced by students. Regular physical activity in the form of extracurricular activities and school sports programmes has a positive impact on students' mood, self-confidence, and ability to manage their emotions better. In addition, the Guidance and Counselling service acts as a facilitator in combining sports activities with self-development programmes, so that sports are not only a physical activity but also a medium for

preventive counselling. Guidance counsellors utilise sports activities to build closer communication with students, provide emotional support, and instil social skills. Through this approach, synergy is created that supports the formation of a healthy, adaptive, and positive mental state in students. Overall, the collaboration between sports activities and counselling services is effective in improving students' mental health, as it provides an outlet for releasing tension, healthy social interaction, and reinforcing positive values such as discipline, cooperation, and sportsmanship. Therefore, it is recommended that schools continue to optimise sports programmes integrated with guidance and counselling services, so that they can become a comprehensive strategy in creating a learning environment that supports students' mental well-being.

**Declaration**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

**Ethics approval and consent to participate**

Not applicable

**Consent for publication**

Not applicable

**Availability of data and materials**

Not applicable

**Competing interests**

All authors declare that there are no relevant conflicts of interest related to this research.

**Author contributions**

NAM analyzed and interpreted the patient data regarding the hematological disease and the transplant. BW and RBS performed the histological examination of the kidney, and was a major contributor in writing the manuscript, All authors read and approved the final manuscript."

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